

Shale Scablands (417,176 acres)



Figure 34. Shale Scablands Focus Area

The very dry Shale Scablands area is covered mostly by sagebrush grassland that is intersected by woody draws. The species that make up the woody draws are mostly green ash, buffaloberry, chokecherry, and some juniper.

Landscape Characteristics

This subsection consists of dissected shale plains formed in calcareous shale, claystone, and sandstone. Elevations range from 2,650 to 4,100 feet. Drainage density is high. Mean annual precipitation ranges from 11 to 15 inches, with about 20 percent falling as snow. The soil temperature and moisture regimes are frigid and aridic ustic. Primary natural disturbances are drought and fire. Another important natural disturbance regime is prairie dog complexes. Land use is predominantly livestock grazing. The breakdown for land stewardship in the Shale Scablands area is as follows:

U.S. Federal Agencies:	126,889 acres, or 30.4% of total area, which include:
BLM:	126,889 acres, or 30.4 of toal area
State Agencies:	21,992 acres, or 5.3% of total area
Private:	268,295 acres, or 64.3% of total area

Associated Habitats

Habitat	Habitat Tier	Percentage of Area
Mixed Broadleaf Forest	I	2.22
Mesic Shrub Grassland Associations	I	3.01
Low Density Xeric Forest	II	3.17

Moderate/High Cover Grasslands	I	3.47
Rock	III	4.40
Mixed Mesic Shrubs	II	4.60
Mixed Xeric Shrubs	I	5.42
Very Low Cover Grasslands	I	5.49
Badlands	II	7.60
Wetland and Riparian	I	8.50
Salt-desert Shrub/ Dry Salt Flats	I	8.56
Low/Moderate Cover Grasslands	I	13.01
Sagebrush	I	25.05

Note: A total of 94.52% of the Shale Scablands area is represented; 5.48% is made up of a combination of other habitat types.

Associated Species of Greatest Conservation Need (Tier I Species)

There are a total of 245 terrestrial vertebrate species that are found within the Shale Scablands Focus Area. Tier I species are listed below. All associations can be found in Table 37.

Amphibians: Northern Leopard Frog

Reptiles: Snapping Turtle, Spiny Softshell, Western Hog-nosed Snake, and Milksnake

Birds: Common Loon, Bald Eagle, Greater Sage-Grouse, Whooping Crane, Mountain Plover, Long-billed Curlew, Black Tern, and Burrowing Owl,

Mammals: Townsend's Big-eared Bat, Black-tailed Prairie Dog, Meadow Jumping Mouse, and Black-footed Ferret

Conservation Concerns & Strategies

Conservation Concerns	Conservation Strategies
Loss of habitat due to conversion of native prairie to crops	Policy-based approaches that encourage the conservation of natural communities, rather than support their conversion
	Support public and private conservation programs/activities that encourage and support private land use stewardship
	Increased cooperative efforts to maintain ecological features or processes on public, private, and tribal lands

Drainage of natural wetlands	Participate in government and private conservation partnerships to reduce the loss of wetland habitat and restore lost wetlands
Invasive or exotic plant species	Cooperative efforts to reduce the abundance of exotic plant species
Disruption of natural disturbance processes, especially fire	Work with other agencies, tribes and private organizations to restore the natural disturbance processes
Range or forest management practices	Support government and private conservation activities that encourage and support sustainable land management practices (example; rest and rotation schedules)

References

The Nature Conservancy. 1999. Ecoregional Conservation in the Northern Great Plains Steppe. Northern Great Plains Steppe Ecoregional Planning Team. 76 pp.